Only twice since the turn of the century has there been a large scale threat of open conflict between the races. The earliest threat was in 1922 and was caused by the beating of a Black woman on the island by a White man. The island's men set out to retaliate. Whites were attacked and beaten in Charleston and atmosphere was tense throughout the county. Then in 1970 the city sanitation and hospital workers went on strike. As the months past without much movement toward settling the disagreements the Black now jobless community became increasingly tensed and similar repeats of attacks on Whites by Blacks were reported.

The relationship between the races has never been "peaches and cream." Because Whites maintain a tight hold on the economic patterns on the islands, islanders are to some degree reluctant to physically express their feelings. Shooting incidents between the races, while not common, can be anticipated from time to time. The older islanders who have slaved in the fields of the large farmers have not forgotten the degrading condition under which they were economically obligated to function for some thirty-five cents per day. Younger islanders, also well aware of this history, simply refuse to repeat the pattern. The extent to which they are successful in breaking down the colonial economic patterns on the island will determine the future of Blacks on the Sea Islands.

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having assumed management in 1802, finding the gang good, but "very disorderly which is invariably the case when there is a frequent change of managers."[9] Later his son succeeded him.

Louis Manigault, after having made only half a crop due to his new overseer's inexperience, wrote, "He says 'he will do better another year, that now he sees into it,' and as is well known, 'Never change an Overseer if You can help it.' We try him once (but only once) more."[10] But he proved no better the second year than the first. "Elated by a strong and very false religious feeling he began to injure the plantation a vast deal, placing himself on a par with the Negroes, by even joining in with them at their prayer meetings, breaking down long established discipline, which in every Case is so difficult to preserve, favouring and siding in any difficulty with the people, against the Drivers, besides causing numerous grievances."[11] And so Manigault was forced to look for a new overseer.

ORGANIZATION OF SLAVE LABOR

Planters learned early in the use of slave labor that it was necessary to give certain trusted Negroes limited authority over the others so that with a change of overseers the plantation routine might be disturbed as little as possible. On the large plantations the seasoned Negroes trained the new ones and were responsible for their behaviour. In the early days of the plantation regime, when a gang of fresh Africans was purchased, they were assigned

[9] R. King, Jr., "On the Management of the Butler Estate," *Southern Agriculturist*, Dec., 1828.
[10] Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier*, I, 143.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

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in groups to certain reliable slaves who initiated them into the ways of the plantation. These drivers, as they were called, had the right of issuing or withholding rations to the raw recruits and of inflicting minor punishments. They taught the new slaves to speak the broken English which they knew and to do plantation work which required little skill, gathering oyster shells to be burned for making lime, mixing concrete from sand, lime, and shells, cutting wood, and ditching fields. At the end of a year, the master or overseer for the first time directed the work of the new Negro who now had become "tamed," assigning him to a special task of plantation work along with the other seasoned hands who had long since learned to obey orders, to arise when the conch blew at "day clean," to handle a hoe in listing and banking, to stand still when a white man spoke.

The planter usually divided his hands into four classes: drivers, tradesmen, house servants, and field hands. The number of drivers on a plantation depended upon its size. Only the largest of the St. Helena plantations had as many as two. It was the driver's business to superintend generally the field hands, and he carried a small club or whip as his "wand of office." He issued rations; he saw that each laborer's task was properly performed; and he inflicted corporal punishment whenever he saw fit, always, however, subject to the overseer's or master's order. In the absence of the overseer or owner, the driver usually succeeded to much of their authority, and in many cases knew more about the details of plantation affairs than the owner himself. For instance, when St. Helena Island was captured by Federal troops in 1861,

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the drivers quite generally remained at home issuing rations and directing the work of the plantation.

R. King, Jr., overseer of the Butler estate, thought that the selection of drivers was one of the "grand points" in plantation management. A cruel driver could demoralize the whole plantation, while an honest one could keep the slaves busy and happy. "An order from a driver," he said in explaining his method of plantation discipline, "is to be as implicity obeyed as if it came from myself, nor do I counteract the execution, (unless directly injurious,) . . . It would be endless for me to superintend the drivers and field hands too, and would of course make them useless."[12] Miss Harriet Ware, a missionary to St. Helena Island in 1862, described Limus, a driver on one of the St. Helena plantations, as being "very smart" and easy to learn. "He has the energy and *cuteness* and big eye for his own advantage of a born New Englander. He is not very moral or scrupulous, and the church-members will tell you 'not yet,' with a smile, if you ask whether he belongs to them. But he leads them all in enterprise, and his ambition and consequent prosperity make his example a very useful one on the plantation."[13]

Next to the driver in importance and authority were the tradesmen and the house servants. While the num-

[12] *Southern Agriculturist*, Dec. 1828. "But the grand point [in managing the Butler estate] was to suppress the brutality and licentiousness practiced by the principal men on it; (say the drivers and tradesmen). More punishment is inflicted on every plantation by the men in power from private pique, than from a neglect of duty. . . . The driver to screen favourites, or apply their time to his own purposes, imposes a heavy tax on some. Should they murmur, an opportunity is taken, months after, to punish those unfortunate fellows for not doing their own and other tasks. . . . As an evidence of the various opportunities that a brutal driver has to gratify his revenge, . . . let any planter go into his field, and in any Negro's task he can find apparently just grounds for punishment."

[13] *Letters from Port Royal*, pp. 37-38.

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ilton Couper's Hopeton plantation in 1841, was agreeably surprised to see the rank held there by the black mechanics. "When these mechanics come to consult Mr. Couper on business," he wrote, "their manner of speaking to him is quite as independent as that of English artisans to their employers."[18]

Besides the tradesmen, Edward L. Pierce, in 1862 found on the St. Helena Island plantations among the group of laborers "more intelligent than the average," plowmen, watchmen, and religious leaders. Each plantation also had its stock minder who attended to the breeding and care of the stock; and on the better managed plantations, its poultry minder as well. The stock minder frequently served also as coachman for the overseer's family, while the coachman for the planter's family was usually one of the house servants.

Negroes unable to do a full day's work, "quarter hands," "half hands," and "three-quarter hands," usually performed the house work. For instance, the usual house servants on Henry A. Middleton's Weehaw plantation near Georgetown were "a cook that is not a full task[,] a girl of twelve, a boy of fourteen."[19] An old woman did the gardening for the overseer's family, and an old man attended to the overseer's and the owner's horses and served as coachman for the overseer. The house servants attached to the planter's family went back and forth with the family from the plantation to the summer house.

[18] Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States*, I, 267.

[19] Henry A. Middleton, Jr., Weehaw Plantation Book. In possession of Langdon Cheves, Charleston, S. C.

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CHAPTER VII

THE SLAVE COMMUNITY

THE SLAVE AND THE LASH

THE EVERY-DAY life of the slave people on a St. Helena plantation was by no means crowded with constant toil. In the late spring when the cotton had to be hoed at the critical stages and again in the autumn when the cotton was in "good blow" they might work from "day clean" to "fust dark," but these were unusual periods, and, as a reward for the extra labor, their masters dealt out choice rations of molasses and meat and passed around presents of tobacco and gay headcloths. The ordinary task of a full hand kept him in the field only four or five hours a day so that the "smart" ones were habitually through by two o'clock. Only the "t'ick headed" remained as late as five. The rest of the day was theirs to spend as they chose.

A southern youth, Hamilton Couper, who had spent all his life on his father's sea-island cotton and rice plantation on the Georgia coast was surprised to find the white servants working so hard in New Haven where he was attending Yale. The Irish maid-of-all-work in his rooming house, so he wrote to his mother, "does more than any servant I have ever seen."[1] The Honorable Amelia Murray of England who visited Couper's parents at their Hopeton plantation was also impressed with the difference in work required of the southern slave and the northern "saucy help." "I never saw servants in any old English family," she observed, "more comfortable, or more de-

[1] Couper-Wylly Papers. Hamilton Couper to Mrs. J. H. Couper, 1846.

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In February, 1863, the Government began to sell the conquered territory at auction for the Federal direct tax levied by the Act of August 5, 1861. Some of the land was sold to private individuals and some was bid in by the United States for naval and military purposes and some for "school farms," the profits from which were to be applied to the education of the Negro, now declared free by Act of Congress, July 17, 1862,[33] and by virtue of the President's proclamation of January 1, 1863.

In 1864 all Government plantations were leased to white superintendents. After rejecting in 1862 the plan of the cotton agents to rent out the plantations, the Government had come two years later to accept it. But General Saxton, still the director of "freedmen's affairs," did not propose to stand by and see the Negro abused. In April, 1864, he issued a circular requiring all superintendents of plantations, whether of government or private ownership, to file a signed statement with their general superintendents setting forth the terms of the agreement existing between themselves and their laborers. The general superintendent was then ordered to visit the plantation, explain the contract to the Negroes, and affix to it the names of all who agreed to the terms. Any laborer who objected to them was warned to leave his employer or to stay at his own risk.[34]

In many instances, the general superintendents encouraged the teachers to lease the school farms and permitted them to do so free of rent, provided that they live on the plantation and teach the children of their "dis-

[33] *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XII, 591. Congress declared free all slaves of rebel masters on places occupied by the United States forces, or escaping thereto.

[34] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 262n.

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A superintendent's work kept him busy early and late. It was the duty of each to visit as often as possible all the plantations under him, some of which were as far as four miles from his quarters, equip them with implements from the Government storehouses, protect the cattle and other property upon them, urge the laborers to work the Government land as well as their own private patches, explain to them their own new condition and the purposes of the Government toward them, procure and distribute clothing and food whenever the army issued rations or the benevolent associations sent supplies,[38] draw pay rolls for labor on cotton, pay the amounts and settle the disputes which inevitably arose on such occasions. In addition to these duties which were essential to the cultivation of the land the superintendent was expected to attend the praise meetings whenever convenient, read the Bible to the people, instruct on Sundays and other days those wishing to learn to read, protect the laborers from injuries, settle disputes which arose among them, and endeavor "to elevate them, and prepare them to become worthy and self-supporting citizens."[39]

One of the most serious problems which the superintendents had to face was the discipline of their laborers. They were not permitted under any circumstance to whip insubordinate Negroes; they did not like to withhold rations; they had no place to imprison offenders except in the storehouses or in the closets of their own apartments. As a result, a wilful laborer had the upper hand of his

[38] *House Ex. Doc.* no. 142, 41st Cong., 2d sess. Pierce and his helpers distributed the first year of the experiment 91,834 garments, 35,829 books and pamphlets, 5,895 yards of cloth, and $3,000 of farming implements and seeds.

[39] Pierce, "Second Report," p. 317.

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195 eral officials, and northern speculators who hoped to make of Beaufort, or if not of Beaufort, of Hilton Head or Bay Point, a great seaport second only to New York. A few planters were able to redeem their land and begin planting under contracts with their former slaves made on terms approved by General Saxton, now assistant commissioner of the Freedman's Bureau.[3] Dr. Clarence Fripp, for instance, began to practice medicine on St. Helena Island shortly after the close of the war and by November, 1865, had obtained a surgeon's contract from General Saxton and was living at St. Helenaville next door to his former residence which was then occupied by Miss Towne.[4] Not more than three or four planters were able to redeem land on St. Helena. The heirs of Captain John Fripp redeemed a part of Corner Farm; Mrs. Eliza H. Chaplin, five acres of her Indian Hill plantation which originally contained 400 acres; and Edgar W. Fripp, 732 acres of

[3] Saxton was succeeded January 15, 1866, by General Robert K. Scott of Ohio. See Webster, "The Operation of the Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina," *Smith College Studies*, I, 86-91.

[4] Dennett, special correspondent for the *Nation*, in the issue of Nov. 30, 1865, gives a picture of Clarence Fripp on his return to St. Helena. Among the northern soldiers and traders in the hotel at Hilton Head, Dennett discovered a "person who had the easily distinguishable appearance and manners of a South Carolinian." This gentleman, a person of some fifty years old, dressed tolerably well in a suit of grey clothes, with a large display of crumpled linen at the collar and cuffs of his coat, sat before the stove, smoking and talking very freely about his present poverty and his plans for the future. After saying that he had left St. Helena when DuPont captured Port Royal, leaving his plate and furniture behind, he told about the sale of his plantation for federal taxes. "Some Massachusetts man had bought it, and he didn't know when he would get it back. . . . Up in Greenville he soon spent all his money to support his family, but if he'd had money he couldn't have saved his property. How was he to come back inside the Yankee lines and pay the tax? The Commissioners knew very well it couldn't be done; the sale was a very unfair thing." By returning to Beaufort now, "he hoped to be able to pick up a little medical practice; but if his profession failed him, he supposed his son and himself could put up a cabin somewhere in the vicinity, and get fish and oysters enough to live on."

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operation a system whereby he might train the Negro to ways of thrift and independence. Nor did the Government ever give the Negroes tools and farm equipment except as laborers on the government-operated plantations. When the Negro became a landowner he equipped his own farm from supplies at the trade stores for which he paid prices two or three times greater than those in the New York market;[9] or he bought equipment at the auction sales of confiscated property, paying the highest prices and often bidding against white men.

Nevertheless, it was a fact that the character of the Negro as a hired laborer had been injured by the inflated prices which the soldiers paid them for their wares and by the injudicious policy of their well-meaning friends of the North. White planters, for instance, were jealously watched by officials of the Freedmen's Bureau who were over-anxious lest the freedmen be victimized. Officials of the Freedmen's Bureau laid down the terms of the contract between planter and employee,[10] giving the employer practically no control over his laborers.

Under the system of labor thus established the Negro worked for his employer less than three months in the year.[11] He seldom worked more than five hours a day and half of that time he spent on his own crop of corn, potatoes, and peanuts so that the planter had the use of his services about one-fourth of each working day. In addition, the planter supplied each family of laborers with

[9] Reid, *After the War*, p. 114.

[10] See Webster, "The Operations of the Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina," *Smith College Studies*, I, 93-104, 113-118.

[11] See "The South As It Is," *Nation*, Dec., 1865, p. 747. Dennett interviewed most of the planters on St. Helena. See also *Sen. Ex. Doc.* no. 6, 39th Cong., 2d sess., p. 123.

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a house and fuel and all the land for their own use that they chose to cultivate, usually three or four acres. Upon the corn land, however, they paid a rent of a bushel to the acre and usually supplied all the sweet potatoes needed by the white family. But the planter also paid his laborers a money wage of about $15 an acre for listing, planting, and hoeing the cotton crop and 2½ cents a pound for picking it. The withdrawal of the army and a succession of crop failures were going, however, in a few years to change the situation.

THE STARVING TIME

The only good crop of sea-island cotton grown during the Federal occupation was that of 1863. After the war, sea-island cotton planters faced a series of failures and the freedmen began to feel the pinch of hard times. "The negroes' crops did not turn out very well, as a general rule," wrote Charles Ware from St. Helena in 1865, "want of manure and careless working being the principal causes; the caterpillar did a great deal of damage."[12] The crops of 1866, 1867, 1868, were likewise failures, and at the same time the price of cotton dropped. These conditions drove several of the northern planters from St. Helena; and, for the first time, large tracts of land lay idle. Miss Towne who had bought a part of Frogmore plantation wrote in 1868, "I don't believe a white man would run the place for love or what money he could make, because there are so few white men, and so much unleased land."[13]

Planters everywhere in the coastal region were laboring against great odds. Factors in Charleston and Savan-

[12] *Letters from Port Royal*, pp. 297, 298. [13] *Letters and Diary*, p. 189.